

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8766

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 2146

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NI, US, CA

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE GOWON TRAVEL TO CANADA

SUMMARY: CANADIANS HAVE TENTATIVE AGREEMENT FROM GOWON TO ATTEND COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVT MEETING IN OTTAWA EARLY AUGUST. POSSIBLE GOWON TRIP TO CANADA RAISES QUESTION WHETHER WE OR NIGERIANS MAY WISH REACTIVATE EARLIER USG INVITATION FOR GOWON VISIT TO WASHINGTON. END SUMMARY.

1. PROFESSOR IVAN HEAD, ASSISTANT TO CANADIAN PM TRUDEAU FOR SECURITY AFFAIRS, CALLED ON GENERAL GOWON MARCH 13 TO DISCUSS CONFERENCE OF COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVT SCHEDULED TO BE HEAD IN OTTAWA AUGUST 2-10, 1973. HEAD, WHO IS VISITING ALL 31 COMMONWEALTH MEMBER COUNTRIES, URGED GOWON TO ATTEND PERSONALLY AND TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS CANADIAN IDEAS ABOUT CONFERENCE FORMAT (INFORMAL AND RELATIVELY UNSTRUCTURED IN ORDER PROMOTE EXCHANGES AND MINIMIZE CONFRONTATIONS).

2. ACCORDING CANADIAN HICOM OFFICER, GOWON TOLD HEAD (WHOM HE KNOWS WELL FROM FOUR PREVIOUS HEAD VISITS TO NIGERIA) THAT HE " WOULD LIKE TO GO" TO OTTAWA FOR COMMONWEALTH MEETING AND HOPES TO DO SO IF CIRCUMSTANCES
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PERMIT. WHILE RECOGNIZING THIS IS FAR SHORT OF COMMITMENT, HEAD CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC THAT GOWON'S AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE WILL LEAD TO FIRM ACCEPTANCE.

3. HICOM SOURCE ADDED THAT GOWON ALSO HAS OUTSTANDING BILATERAL INVITATION TO VISIT TO CANADA, BUT DOUBTS GOC WILL ENCOURAGE HIM TO PICK IT UP AT TIME COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE SINCE TOO MANY OTHER HEADS OF GOVT WILL BE PRESENT TO PERMIT SUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO ANY ONE.

4. COMMENT: SHOULD GOWON MAKE TRIP TO OTTAWA IN AUGUST, QUESTION MAY ARISE OF POSSIBLE VISIT AT SAME TIME TO WASHINGTON. WHILE WE HAVE NO PRESENT INDICATION THAT GOWON THINKING OF REACTIVATING EARLIER USG INVITATION, FMG DECISION- MAKING PROCESS IS SUCH THAT PROPOSAL IN THIS REGARD COULD BE FORTHCOMING AT ANY TIME UP TO DAY OF GOWON'S DEPARTURE. LATE REQUEST COULD CAUSE US CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY SHOULD WE THEN BE UNABLE TO GIVE POSITIVE RESPONSE. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, DOES DEPARTMENT WISH US TO REOPEN WITH FMG, EITHER FORMALLY OR INFORMALLY PROSPECT OF GOWON VISIT TO US, USING POSSIBLE ATTENDANCE AT COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE AS PEG ON WHICH TO HANG INQUIRY? THIS WOULD PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY REMIND FMG NEED FOR ADVANCE NOTIFICATION IF GOWON DESIRES VISIT WASHINGTON.
REINHARDT

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*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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